

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

UNCLAS MANAMA 1230

DEPT PASS USICA, USTS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP USTS BA US

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR INFO ON VISIT USA PROGRAM

1. BAHRAIN APPEARS TO BE A GOOD MARKET FOR A SMALL BUT FORMAL VISIT USA PROGRAM. SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF BAHRAINIS TAKE EXTENDED VACATIONS EACH SUMMER TO AVOID THE LOCAL HOT, HUMID CLIMATE. IN THE PAST THESE TRIPS WERE TO LEBANON AND TO A LESSER EXTENT TO LONDON. WITH LEBANON NO LONGER A LIKELY VACATION SPOT, INDIA, THE FAR EAST, SPAIN AND OTHER AREAS ARE TEMPORARILY FILLING THE GAP. MANY OF THE RELATIVELY SOPHISTICATED AND WEALTHY BAHRAINIS WHO HAVE REGULARLY VACATIONED IN LONDON AND OTHER EUROPEAN CITIES ARE NO LONGER COMFORTABLE THERE DUE TO THE ADVERSE PUBLICITY RESULTING FROM THE INFLUX OF LESS SOPHISTICATED NOVELLE RICHE ARABS. A FEW WEALTHY BAHRAINIS HAVE GONE TO THE U.S. WHERE THEY WERE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT OUR TOURISTIC OFFERINGS AND LOW COSTS.

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2. BAHRAIN HAS A VERY ACTIVE TRAVEL PROMOTION INDUSTRY WITH ONE LARGE FIRM MOVING INTO WHOLESALE PACKAGE TOURS. (FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIS REGION.) A NUMBER OF BAHRAINI TRAVEL AGENTS HAVE OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE GULF REGION. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT IF WE COULD DEMONSTRATE TO THESE AGENTS WHAT THE U.S. HAS TO OFFER, WE COULD OPEN A SIGNIFICANT REGIONAL MARKET FOR USA TOURISM. THIS CONCEPT HAS

BEEN DISCUSSED WITH PANAM AND TWA IN BAHRAIN WHO HAVE
ENDORSED IT AND OFFERED FULL SUPPORT.

3. AS A SMALL POST WITH LIMITED MANPOWER, RESOURCES AND
LIBRARY/DISPLAY AREA WE WOULD HAVE TO CAREFULLY ASSESS
ANY VISIT USA PROGRAM TO AVOID OVERCOMMITMENT. WE WOULD
APPRECIATE BY CABLE A SUMMARY OF SUPPORT OFFERED BY USTS
AND USICA FOR THIS TYPE OF PROGRAM, INCLUDING A SUMMARY
OF PUBLISHED MATERIAL AVAILABLE. WE ALREADY HAVE A REQUEST
FOR POSTER/DISPLAY MATERIAL FROM BRITISH AIRWAYS TO
SUPPORT ITS OWN VISIT USA PROMOTION WITH LOCAL TRAVEL
AGENTS WHEN IT STARTS A BAHRAIN TO NEW YORK TIE-IN OF ITS
CONCORDE SERVICE VIA LONDON. OUR SUPPORT FOR THIS
PROMOTION WILL BE LIMITED AS WE HAVE SO LITTLE MATERIAL.
WE WOULD ALSO REQUEST THAT COPIES OF ANY RECENT GUIDANCE
FOR A VISIT USA PROGRAM BE MAILED TO THE ECONOMIC/
COMMERCIAL OFFICER, AMERICAN EMBASSY, FPO NEW YORK 09526
AS OUR FILES CONTAINED VIRTUALLY NO PAST GUIDANCE.

4. AS SOON AS EMBASSY RECEIVES A RESPONSE WE PLAN TO
INVITE PANAM, TWA AND SELECT TRAVEL AGENTS TO A MEETING
TO DETERMINE WHAT WE MIGHT DO TO JOINTLY PROMOTE THIS
MARKET. WE WILL USE BUSINESS TRAVEL TO MEETINGS AND
EXHIBITIONS AS A MAJOR SELLING POINT.
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